

Wrath of the Night

by Vivian Wilder

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Summary: When the Valar retaliated against the N menor, more than one civilisation was swept beneath the sea on that fateful day.

Thousands of years later, Il vatar resurrects two of the Barbaric Archipelagos' best warriors to aid in a war that could determine the fate of the whole of Middle-Earth. Fem!Hiccup and 10th Walker AU.

Cover image not mine!

1. Prologue

****AN:** Hey everyone! I know that some of you guys were following this story before I spontaneously deleted it. The reason for that was because I didn't want to write a clich  story involving people from other worlds being dragged into Middle-Earth and struggling to adapt to the culture and dealing with other problems with that similarity.**

****I** wanted to write a crossover between these two stories, because both mean a lot to me. With that in mind, I decided to merge the two worlds. The fact that no one really knows where exactly Berk is located on Earth made it all the easier to find a spot for it in Arda.**

****Anyway,** I hope that you will enjoy the prologue. Leave me a review if you like it! All constructive criticism will be graciously accepted. Any flames will be quickly doused with water or used to heat my home.**

****Cover Image by Zer0X on Tumblr****

****DreamWorks Animation Studios, JRR Tolkien, Cressida Cowell and New Line Cinema are the owners their respective characters and universes that are used in this story. I only own the plot.****

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><p>Wrath of the Night

Prologue

Many legends of Middle-Earth often told to little children take great care to include the great civilisation of Númenor. As a host of many a skilled warrior, the island of Númenor was said to have been raised from the depth of the seas by the Valar themselves. It was given as a gift to the Edain, the Fathers of Men who marched with the Sindarin elves into battle against the armies of Morgoth and Sauron during the First Age.

Alas, the fateful day arrived when king Ar-Pharazôn marched on Mordor, claimed Sauron himself as a prisoner and dragged him back to Númenor. What was supposed to be a great victory for the fierce king quickly grew sour when it became evident that Sauron's presence was starting to corrupt the island's ruler at an alarming pace. Overcome with greed and self-concern, Ar-Pharazôn assembled one of the greatest armadas in the history of Arda with the intent of laying siege on the Undying Lands to gain immortality, and effectively breaking one the ultimate divine laws set down by Eru Ilúvatar himself.

The Valar retaliated against the invading army by smiting the soldiers down on sight and imprisoning their souls in the Caves of the Forgotten. Ilúvatar also went as far as conjuring up the wrath of the seas and set colossal waves onto Númenor, flooding the island and letting it sink beneath the waves, forever lost. Sauron managed to escape a watery grave and flitted back to the Black Land, where he grew once more in power and tyranny. There were also a few Númenorian survivors that came to Middle-Earth. Among them was Isildur, who founded the great kingdom of Gondor and became its first king.

However, some say that there was more to the sea civilisation that met the eye. The Rangers of the North often talk about ancient warriors that made a living a few hundred leagues north of Númenor. These warriors, neither friend nor foe, were known by the Númenorians through trade. They were the Vikings, iron-willed people that lived and thrived on archipelagos surrounded by craggy rocks and hazardous sea reefs.

These people were strong as they were proud. They had a history of fighting the supernatural creatures of Morgoth with nothing more than swords, shields and dragons. Yes, dragons. Ranging from resembling islands to being the size of an average housecat, the dragons of the Barbaric Archipelagos were the Vikings' best friends in every way. It was this relationship between man and beast that foresaw a healthy community that was based on trust, respect, bravery and compassion.

Unfortunately, the Barbaric Archipelagos was one of the many small pieces of land was got caught in the middle of the Valar's wrath and was swept under the waves, with one survivor who managed to take the kingdom's history books and leaving them in the care of the Dúnedain before succumbing to physical exhaustion and emotional grief.

It was only after the War of the Last Alliance during the Second Age when the Valar decided to move into action again. As Mandos reluctantly released two deceased souls from his halls, Ilúvatar

restored their former bodies and granted them the longevity of the Elf race. As such, at the moment when Isildur cut the One Ring from Sauron's hand, Middle-Earth birthed two resurrected lives under the light of the full moon.

And so began the adventures of a girl and her dragon.

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><p>AN: Love it? Hate it? Let me know! :)

2. Chapter 1: An Unexpected Letter

AN: Hey guys! Here's the first chapter. It's kind of a backstory that explains Henrika's relationship with some of the characters. Enjoy!

Reviews = updates. All constructive criticism is greatly appreciated. Flame will be doused or used to keep my heater going.

DreamWorks Animation Studios, New Line Cinema, Cressida Cowell and JRR Tolkien all own their respective characters in this story. I only own the plot

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><p>Chapter 1: An Unexpected Letter

Boom!

The muted sound reverberated through the walls of the small room. The room itself was sparsely decorated – only containing a simple bed, an old wooden desk and a large chest made of oak and covered in leather and brass studs. The state of the room, however, was an organised mess. Piles of scribbled paper and books dotted the floor around the desk and bed. Clothes and scraps of cloth and leather were spilling out of the chest like a multicoloured river. Shoes with no left partners were stacked haphazardly in the corner of the room

The bed in question was occupied by a lump swaddled in furs and blankets. Upon hearing the sound, the lump grumbled something unintelligible before snuggling deeper into the warmth of its sanctuary.

Boom!

The repeating thud now rattled the wooden walls and shifted some of the contents on the floor. A cup on top of the desk toppled over, spilling several charcoal pencils onto the floor in a dusty heap.

The lump in the bed huffed and threw back the covers before sitting up. Bright green eyes blinked owlshly while the lithe form of a young woman stretched, relishing in the cracking of stiff joints. She yawned in an unladylike manner before reaching under the bed, pulling out a metal-and-wooden prosthetic and attaching it to the place where her left foot should have been.

**BOOM!**

"Alright, I'm coming! Learn a little bit of patience, will you?" the girl yelled up to the ceiling. Her response was rewarded with a series of muted barks and the sound of fore-paws scratching against the top of the roof. Sighing, she got out of the bed and quickly dressed herself in a simple grey tunic with black leggings. Shrugging on a black fur coat, she grabbed the nearest shoe and jammed it onto her right foot. She quickly grabbed a comb and untangled her short hair before grabbing saddle and some other queer contraption before heading out of the door.

Having a cabin at the foot of the Misty Mountains proved to be a right choice for Henrika Haddock. Although she lived for most of her three thousand year existence in Rivendell, she enjoyed her occasional solitude by coming here and spending quality time with her best friend. Said best friend quickly descended from the top of the roof to greet his rider with a string of short barks and warbles.

"Well, good morning to you too, Mister Bossy," Henrika bemusedly greeted the wriggling mass of black scales, giving him a loving scratch on the head. The dragon itself was a magnificent creature, walking on four powerful legs and stretching the majestic black wings on his back. Smiling, Henrika saddled up the dragon and attached a fin-like contraption to his tail.

"Ready, Toothless?" she asked as she mounted the beast. The dragon gave a huff in reply, settling on his haunches and spreading his wings to their full extent. Beating them powerfully, the duo took off from the ground and shot their way beyond the clouds.

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><p>After three hours of exhilarating flying sequences and tricks, both rider and dragon made their way back to the cabin with the intent of finding a patch of sunlit grass to take an afternoon nap on. It was only queer when the duo found a sealed letter at the door of the cabin. Picking it up, Henrika immediately recognised the handwriting that spelled her name. She quickly broke the seal and began to read:<p>

My dearest Henrika

I hope that this letter finds you in good health. I understand that we have made an agreement that I would not contact you while you went away to spend time with Toothless, but I would not have sent you this if it were of absolute necessity.

_Times are dark, _Eruraviel_. The shadow in the East grows stronger each passing day. The Nine ride again, searching for their master's cursed treasure. I have decided to call upon representatives of each race to a secret council to determine the Free People's next move. I need you to be in attendance as well. Bring Toothless with you along with the possessions that you can carry with you._

Ride swiftly and we shall see each other soon, my daughter. Arwen, Estel and the twins will be delighted to be reunited with their sister again.

Yours truly

Ada

Slowly, Henrika lowered her hand, an unreadable expression darkening her features. Toothless noticed his mistress' distress and started to nudge against her side, trying to get her attention. Snapping out of her reverie, Henrika turned to Toothless and started to pet him absentmindedly while staring into the dragon's big green eyes.

"They found it, bud," she murmured, "They really found it. Now it we can all get rid of that stupid ring and avenge our loved ones."

Toothless crooned sadly, nuzzling Henrika's hair while both of their minds were haunted with painful memories of screams and watery deaths. Despite that fact that it happened thousands of years ago, the sinking of their home will be forever burned into their minds. So much death; no one was prepared for the onslaught of nature itself. And she couldn't do anything to help her people. She felt like she had failed them-

No, she mentally disciplined herself. _Why shed tears when you can avenge that what was taken from you? _ After being resurrected from the dead and taken into the House of Elrond, Henrika and Toothless spent many days and nights grieving for their lost families and friends. Now that the opportunity to avenge their deaths presented itself, Henrika made her choice.

Gripping Toothless tightly to her, she whispered in his ear, "Come on, bud. We have a meeting to attend."

Toothless huffed in response and Henrika released him to go back to the cabin to collect her belongings. Upon entering the cabin, she quickly cleared the floor of its contents and packed them away. She placed several books and clothing into the chest and shut the lid properly before she picked it up and carried it outside and locking the door with a simple brass key. Henrika then quickly loaded her possessions onto Toothless' back and clambered into the saddle for a second time that day. Casting one last look at the cosy cabin and the clearing that surrounded it, Henrika motioned for Toothless to take off and fly straight to Rivendell.

It was one thing to travel around on horseback, but flying was something different altogether. The trees and the rolling hills flickered by as Toothless covered great distances in mere minutes. What would have been a three day journey on horseback ended up being a two hour flight. Henrika smiled as the Valley of Imaldris came into view. It had been her home for many years and rarely saw much changed.

The tranquility of the valley itself proved to be the much needed balm for her soul when she was first discovered and brought there by the elves. It was in this valley where she learned to heal, to work wonders with metal, to hunt and to defend herself. It was the place where she found a family to love and friends to adore again.

It's good to be home, Henrika thought with fondness when Toothless landed at the gates of the community, where the guards nodded respectfully at her presence and her siblings were waiting with

anticipation. As she dismounted from Toothless, she was immediately swept up into a group hug by her brothers, Elrohir and Elladan, who were both talking at once as they excitedly asked her questions about her latest adventure.

Laughing at their timeless mannerisms, she untangled herself from them to greet her other two siblings. Estel was the only one out of the four of them that aged slightly since she last saw them. His beard and hair was slightly longer and the faint wrinkles that were only noticeable when he smiled were slightly more prominent around his eyes. Smiling, she greeted him and Arwen with enthusiastic hugs and the five of them walked with Toothless into the marble buildings, where their father was waiting for them in his study.

Yes, it's good to be home again.

* * *

><p>AN: Eruraviel means _Lioness of Eru_. The elvish name was given to her because of her fiery personality and wild auburn hair. That and she was brought to Arda by Ilā°vatar himself. Reviews are loved. They motivate me to keep writing :)**

3. Chapter 2: Strangers like Me

AN: Hey everyone! Here's a new chapter. Don't worry, I have not, and will not abandon this story.

Please note that I am making a few Big Four references in this chapter when explaining Henrika's past. I really like the idea of the four different kingdoms uniting to defend themselves and living in peace. Please also note that I am using a few refs from How to Train Your Dragon 2, so beware the spoilers! (I will post notices at the top of each chapter containing possible spoilers)

Anyway, enjoy and leave me a review or two!

All notable characters and locations belong to their original creators. I only own the plot of this story.

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><p>Wrath of the Night Chapter 2: Strangers like Me

If someone had asked Henrika to describe her experiences with being part of Lord Elrond's family, she would probably talk them to sleep, because there were so many. Her days in Imladris were filled with mischief-making, learning and teaching others about the history of her people and their relation to the Nā°menor. Elves such as Glorfindel and Erestor were her teachers in archery, sword-fighting, and hand-to-hand combat. When she was first given sanctuary by Elrond, the only languages she could speak were Common Tongue, Norse and Gaelic. Within three months of her stay Henrika had picked up basic Sindarin phrases, and with further training, she had mastered the melodic language.

Less than a year into her stay in the Hidden Valley it became evident that Elrond thought of her as his own child. Henrika knew that he

would never replace her deceased parents Stoick and Valka, but she accepted him into her life as her teacher and godfather. She was welcomed and loved by Arwen and the twins as their own sister. It was a new experience altogether, because she was originally born as an only child.

When she was not busy spending time with Arwen or being dragged into another scheme by Elrohir and Elladan, the former Viking kept her hands and mind busy by practicing the skills that she learned during her childhood. The residents of Rivendell soon learned that their newest guest was not only a dragon rider, but an impressive navigator, an artist and an excellent blacksmith as well. Aside from crafting impressive weaponry, Henrika would spend hours in Elrond's library where she would fill books and scrolls of parchment with detailed descriptions of her past life and her people, while learning more about the societies and politics of Middle-Earth.

It turns out that the Barbaric Archipelagos were not just the home of the Vikings of the Wilderwest, but also of three other nations: the Highlanders of the East, the White Walkers of the North and the Sun Warriors of the South. These four nations lived together peacefully and would unite to fight under one banner when they were threatened by the forces of Morgoth.

The Highlanders were not only known for their impressive archers, but also for their skills as horse masters. Many of the best steeds of the Archipelagos were of Highlander origin and these horses were known for their speed and endurance. Then there were the Sun Warriors. As residents of the southern kingdom of Corona, the Sun Warriors excelled in defensive combat and healing. The Vikings of Berk were best known for their teamwork and partnership with dragons, as well as leaders in offensive battle manoeuvres. They studied dragons along with the White Walkers, who were said to be the guardians of the Bewilderbeast's sanctuary. Their soldiers were notorious for their deadly precision when it came to incapacitating and taking enemies down.

Despite the differences between them, the four kingdoms flourished through trade and alliances. The Barbaric Archipelagos would have been a prosperous country if it had not been for the downfall of NÃ°menor . . .

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><p>"About what you said in your message . . . how can you be certain that it has been found? The last I heard it fell into the possession of the creature Gollum, who disappeared five hundred years ago."<p>

The lord of Imladris looked gravely at the young Viking. They were sitting with Aragorn and Arwen in a secluded part of the Rivendell library. The twins had decided to turn in early that night, for they were to leave for the eastern border the next day. Their mission was to meet up with the dwarves coming from Erebor and to escort them safely to Rivendell.

"Indeed, my child. Isildur's bane has been found, and now lies in the possession of an uncanny Hobbit."

"A Hobbit? How could a Shireling have possibly got their hands on

that?" Henrika asked, surprised. She knew of the Hobbits and how they were known to keep to themselves and steer clear of Middle-Earth's conflicts. Their home, the Shire, was a safe-haven to any weary traveller seeking shelter for the night.

Elrond sighed. "Do you remember when our Mithrandir brought Thorin Oakenshield and his band of dwarves through the Hidden Valley sixty years ago?"

"How could I forget that? That journey was what triggered the Battle of the Five Armies. But what does that have to do with the One Ring?"

It was Arwen who spoke next. "When the Ring fell into the hands of Gollum, he wandered deep into the caverns of the Misty Mountains, feasting on the flesh of any unfortunate soul that he could come across. When Thorin's company departed from Rivendell, they passed through the underground lair of the Goblins. One of their numbers, a Hobbit by the name of Bilbo Baggins, became separated from his fellow travellers and stumbled upon Gollum. He ended up tricking the corrupted creature to give him the Ring, escaped from the unforgiving labyrinth of caves and was reunited with his company before they entered the forest of Mirkwood."

"It has been confirmed," continued Elrond, "that Bilbo has kept the Ring on his person for the last sixty years, therefore greatly extending his life. It was only recently that he handed it down to Frodo Baggins, his nephew and heir."

"And where is this master Frodo now?" Henrika asked. "You told me that the Ringwraiths are riding again. They will leave no stone unturned in their quest to find what belongs to their master. His life is now at risk!"

"Do not fear, sister," Aragorn replied calmly, placing a gentle hand on top of hers, "for he rests with his three companions in the safety of the Houses of Healing. They arrived here two days before you and Toothless."

Said dragon grumbled from his place by Henrika's feet as he shifted his body to make himself more comfortable.

"How soon can we expect the rest of the council to arrive?" she asked, leaning down to give dozing beast a gentle scratch on the head. Toothless immediately stilled and started purring gently.

"We can expect our Mirkwood counterparts to and the dwarves to arrive within the week. The party from Gondor may take two weeks or more," Aragorn replied. "However, I am concerned about Mithrandir, my lord. We have expected him to arrive more than a day ago."

Elrond chuckled, "My boy, if there was only one thing that I have learned of the Istari it would be this; they are never early, nor are they late. They arrive precisely when they need to."

Henrika smiled at her godfather's comment, feeling the conversation coming to an end. At that she stood up, bid her family a good night and left the library with Toothless. When she reached her chambers, she made a bee-line for the bathroom. Discarding her smelly clothes, Henrika quickly changed into a simple silk nightgown that reached the

top of her ankles. Under normal circumstances she would have called one of the maids to draw a bath for her, but considering how late it was, she decided against it. Instead, she simply washed her face in the cool water that she poured into the basin from the pitcher that stood next to the bath. Upon entering the bedroom Henrika unfastened Toothless' saddle and tailfin, removing them and storing the items in a wooden chest. With a yawn, she took off her prosthetic and clambered into the huge bed. After tucking herself in, Toothless took his queue to climb on top of the bed and settling in beside his beloved mistress, curling into a ball of black scales and going back to sleep.

Henrika smiled as she gave the beast one final scratch between the ears before blowing out the candle on her bedside table and settling into a comfortable position, closing her eyes and waiting for blissful sleep to take her.

* * *

><p>AN: Thanks again for reading! Let me know about your thoughts on this story :)

4. Chapter 3: Arrivals and Revelations

****Hey everyone! Here's a new chapter to feast your eyes on. Also, thank you to the two reviewers! Guys like you keep me motivated to keep writing.****

****Remember that reviews are greatly appreciated! You are also welcome to leave constructive criticism regarding my writing style, the plot, etc.****

****Disclaimer: All notable characters belong to their respective authors and film studios. I only own the plot of this story.****

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><p>Chapter 3: Arrivals and Revelations

She was floating.

That was the first thing Henrika realised when she let her mind succumb to the deep abyss of blissful sleep. She was floating in mid-air, surrounded by darkness and warmth. Here and there she could see flickers of colour as they flitted around her and sporadically taking on different shapes. Some of them were the shapes of dragons that she knew well, like Monstrous Nightmares, Zipplebacks, Nadders and the odd Gronckle or so. Then the images began shifting, merging together to create a breathtaking backdrop of steep mountains, vast blue seas and a azure sky dotted with clouds that looked as soft as a lamb's underbelly wool. She was not floating any more, but flying. Not on Toothless, but beside him, with wings sprouting from her back carrying her on the wind currents. She could feel the wind as it ruffled her hair and tickled her face. Smiling, Henrika started an impromptu aerial dance with Toothless as dragon and girl flew up and down, twirling sideways and spinning circles around each other. She let out a whoop of joy, her heart singing with elation as she savours this form of freedom.

Then, without warning, the clouds start to lose their white fluffiness, quickly turning dark and menacing. Thunder starts to rumble and lightning flashes around her, resembling grotesque tears in the sky. Every time a tendril of light flashed, images were reflected within the black clouds. They were quick and rapid in succession, but a few stood out for Henrika. They were faces of people that she knew and of strangers. She saw her mother and father fighting side by side against a Shadow Wraith and numerous other servants of Morgoth. An aged man sitting on an incarnate wooden throne who seemed on the verge of death. A pale tree bare of anything except a single bloom. She then sees an image of Mithrandir being tortured by figure cloaked in shadows. She tries to help, but her feet are firmly planted onto the ground. Suddenly the Grey Wizard breaks free and escapes the torturer's lair on the back of giant eagle, flying into the rising sun . . .

Henrika shot up from her position in the bed, panting. Without thinking, she reached under her bed, put her leg on and stumbled out of the room, leaving a snoring Toothless behind. She had to get out of the main building, for the walls seemed to close in on her. The soft click of her prosthesis hitting the marble floor was the only sound that echoed through the halls as Henrika made her way to the gardens.

Sighing, she sank down to the ground underneath her favourite oak tree, closing her eyes and leaning back onto its warm bark. The sun was just beginning to show its colours, turning the sky into steel, pink, orange and gold.

What did her dream mean? It was too disturbing to be considered an illusion that had been conjured up by her mind. No, it felt like a warning of things yet to come . . .

A sharp, piercing cry filled the air, pulling the girl from her internal debate. Looking up, she saw something that made her heart stop. An eagle was making his way towards Rivendell, carrying someone on its back. As the majestic creature landed a few yards away from her, she immediately recognised the passenger.

"Mithrandir!" she cried, rushing forward and catching the poor man just as he was starting to fall off the bird. Her balance faltered slightly with the addition of weight in her arms as she tried to lower the wizard gently onto the soft grass. He looked dreadful; his face was marred with small cuts and bruises and his hair and beard invaded by snarling tangles. His grey robes were dirty and torn, and it looked as if he had been starved for a brief period of time.

She turned to the eagle. "Hannon le," she whispered bowing her head respectfully towards the bird. The eagle let out a musical cry before it flapped its wings and took off towards the rising dawn. Sensing someone behind her, Henrika noticed a guard making his way towards her and the injured Istari. He must have been alerted by the commotion.

"Send for lord Elrond at once! The Grey One has returned with many an injury. He needs immediate medical attention!" she called towards him. The guard nodded before turning on his heel and rushing towards the main building. Henrika then turned to Gandalf and slowly helped him into a sitting position.

"Mithrandir?" she asked the man gently, "What on earth happened to you? Where have you been?"

He sighed, "My dear, I will answer all of your questions in due time. For now, we must quickly get to your father. I have something of utmost importance to tell him."

Henrika nodded, helping him up and supporting some of the man's weight as the duo slowly made their way towards the Houses of Healing.

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><p>The whole of Rivendell was in uproar by the time breakfast had arrived. It turns out that Gandalf's latest adventure included him organising a spectacular fireworks show for Bilbo Baggins' eleventy-first birthday and confronting the aging hobbit about him possessing the One Ring. After a heated argument, Bilbo passed the ring down to his nephew Frodo. Gandalf immediately left after the birthday party to seek the counsel of Saruman the White, an old friend and teacher of his whom currently took up residence in Isengard. Upon arriving, he made an ugly discovery; Saruman abandoned his duty as a guide to Men and allied himself with Sauron.<p>

Gandalf tried to make the corrupted Istari see reason and to stop his madness, but to no avail. Saruman ended up imprisoning and torturing Gandalf as a way to find out about the One Ring's current whereabouts, but Gandalf resisted, refusing to betray Frodo and his friends. When all seemed lost, the one of the sacred eagles came to Grey Wizard's aid and carried him to the safety of the Hidden Valley.

In the chaos following Gandalf's revelation, Henrika was swiftly introduced to Samwise Gamgee, a stout hobbit with sandy blonde hair, Meriadoc Brandybuck, who had flaming red hair, as well as his cousin Peregrin Took, a curious hobbit who had the talent for asking many questions. As the three companions were whisked away to the great hall by the smell of delicious food, the dragon rider discreetly excused herself and returned to her chambers in order to get ready for the day. Toothless was still fast asleep when she entered her bedroom.

After taking a long soak in a freshly drawn bath, Henrika proceeded to dress herself semi-formally. Despite the fact that she did not favour dresses, she rummaged through her drawers and pulled out a simple, long-sleeved dark green dress with silver embroidery along the hem and neckline. She traded her boot for a slipper of emerald colour and adjusted her prosthesis to ensure the balance between her two feet. By the time she had finished packing away various articles of clothing and shoes, Toothless finally started to stir from his spot on the unmade bed. He stretched his legs and wings, giving a big yawn and clambering off the bed to greet his mistress. His antics drew a small smile from Henrika.

"Well, good morning to you too, Mister Lazy. Fancy you getting up so late," she teased the dragon as she scratched him gently on his head and behind his ears. The dragon purred and cooed, leaning lovingly into her touch.

"There's something I need to tell you, bud," Henrika murmured. Toothless' eyes opened, a sure sign that he was listening intently to what she was about to say.

"Mithrandir has returned to us, although somewhat injured. I'm telling you this because I know you are excited to see him again, so please be gentle when you greet him. There is also the matter of the hobbits and the other guests that are due to arrive soon."

The dragon shifted from her touch, sitting back on his haunches and gazing at his rider intently. He knew that she was going to give him some sort of a lecture on proper behaviour when wandering around guests.

"Many of these people have had some bad experiences with dragons in the past. I only ask of you to be gentle and friendly, so no sudden movements, alright? I want you to be on your best behaviour and show everyone how well-mannered dragons can be."

Toothless huffed, leaning forward and bumping his nose against Henrika's forehead as a sign of understanding. She smiled and gave the dragon a light kiss on the snout. Together, the girl and the dragon exited the room and headed down to breakfast, ready to face the outside world again.

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><p>AN: Hope you enjoyed this chapter! Remember, reviews=updates ;)

5. Chapter 4: Of Men and the Like

I know, I know... I haven't been updating very often, but hey, real life can be very time-consuming.

Anyway, I just wanted to thank all of those that reviewed! I really appreciate the feedback.

**So we are now moving on to the Council of Elrond and we get to see a glimpse of Henrika's past. **

Disclaimer: I do not own anything that you recognise

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><p>Chapter 4: Of Men and the Like

"Will the pain ever go away?" Frodo murmured, rubbing his shoulder and wincing as he recalls the fateful night when he was stabbed with a cursed blade. He was currently lounging in the shade of an apple tree, surrounded by shrubs that are heavy with berries, ripe for the picking.

It was just past midday and many of the residents of Imladris were moving at a lazy pace, relaxing in their homes and relishing in the warmth that was radiating from the sky above their heads and the earth below their feet. It was a time like this when one could clearly hear the screeching of the cicadas and the occasional twittering of the birds. Sam, Merry and Pippin were among the lazy

snoozers after they over-indulged in the spoils of Rivendell's kitchens during luncheon. Toothless was there too, although he tried to keep to himself as he mowed through his bowl of raw fish that was freshly caught earlier that day. The Hobbits were somewhat startled when they found themselves in the dragon's presence for the first time, but they quickly learned that the scaly reptile meant them no harm and the four mischief makers quickly adopted him as their newest friend. Toothless quickly warmed up to them as well, and found their antics amusing and endearing. When everyone started to leave the dining hall, the dragon slowly made his way to the river, where a bed of sun-heated rocks awaited him for his afternoon nap.

"It never does," Henrika answered him from her spot where she was basking in the glow of the sunlight. "It lingers and it can sometimes flare at the most unexpected times. But you learn to live with it, until it becomes just another part of your being. However, it can also serve a reminder of lessons that had to be learned the hard way."

"How would you know, lady Henrika?" The Hobbit asked the question with no malice or bitterness, but with curiosity and interest. Ever since their first meeting he took a liking to Henrika. She may have been a woman, but she was her own person. There was an air of wisdom and confidence whenever she walked through the halls of lord Elrond's house. She addressed her peers as her equals and never hesitated to give help where it was needed.

The Viking sat upright, facing Frodo. "You see this?" she asked, pulling up her skirt and gesturing to her left leg. Frodo's eyes widened as he saw for the first time the extent of the woman's injury. With the material lifted, the Hobbit saw that the flesh and bone from her left leg ended abruptly a few inches below her knee, followed by the wood and steel of a prosthesis that replaced the missing foot and ankle.

"I received this during a conflict with someone that I once considered an ally â€" a conflict that was the result of betrayal, a lust for power and greed. To this day it serves to me as a reminder that not all men can be negotiated with. The experience, although painful and humiliating, taught me that evil exists in this world and that it can cause people to commit the most heinous of crimes against friends and family."

Frodo wanted to ask more, but the shadow that haunted the lady's emerald eyes discouraged him from probing any further into what seemed to be an obviously painful subject for her.

"I hear that the elves of Mirkwood will be arriving tomorrow," she commented, immediately putting an ease to the tension that was left by their previous conversation.

"So I have heard! Will there be any more familiar faces at the council?"

Henrika smiled and Frodo could see how her eyes twinkled at the mention of the Woodland elves.

"Indeed, master Baggins. The elves of Mirkwood and I have been strong allies ever since I was called back into the world. Now, enough about me! Do tell me more of the land of rolling green hills that you so

fondly call your home."

The Hobbit chuckled and began to tell a detailed story about the history of the Shire, with Henrika listening with attentive ears and piqued interest.

* * *

><p>It was around sunset when Henrika crossed paths with her dragon again. Toothless, still relishing in the effects of his nap and fish hunt, bounded over to his mistress and greeted her with a string of gurgling warbles. The warrior chuckled as she gently cooed and patted the bight-eyed dragon fondly.<p>

Frodo had left the gardens late afternoon to rejoin his other companions for their afternoon tea (Henrika discovered, to her astonishment, that Hobbits tend to eat at least six meals a day: breakfast, elevenses, luncheon, afternoon tea, dinner and supper), leaving Henrika to finish the rest of her daily routine, which included her preparation for night watch. It was something that Henrika often volunteered to do, since she was not an official guard of the Hidden Valley.

Upon returning to the main buildings, she made a beeline for her chambers, trading her dress for her riding gear that consisted of a pair of brown leggings and a long-sleeved green tunic, both covered with a pseudo-armour that consisted of tough black leather with a red insignia of a dragon's head on the left side of the breastplate. To complete the look of an intimidating warrior, Henrika produced a helmet that acted as a faceless mask, save for the narrow slits made for her eyes. Making her way out of the main gates, she quickly saddled Toothless up and the pair zipped into air, cloaked by the clear black night.

There were many reasons why Henrika enjoyed flying, one being that it gave her some sort of spiritual connection to her family and people who were the best aerial warriors of their time. Up in the air, concealed by silence, Henrika had time to think and to reflect on pending decisions and memories that have long passed through the elusive mists of Time itself.

Tonight, however, it was as if her mind decided to push forward some of the worst experiences of her past life, playing it over and over again like a twisted impression of revolving dancer's figurine that she came across when she visited the royal family of the South for the first time . . .

* * *

><p>She couldn't breathe. The reason for the obstruction of airflow to her body was in the form of a large hand that was covered with scarred, leathery skin that had seen many years of hard work and physical labour and battles. The hand in question was covering her mouth, clamping on with the vice-like grip of a dragon's jaws.

_She was lying down with her back pressed flat onto her bed, her hands tightly bound to the posts behind her head. It was dark and the full moon was obscured by the clouds that were the messengers of an imminent storm that was approaching the Wilderwest at a rapid pace,

low rumbling in the distance being the warning._

The face of the assailant was cloaked by the cover of the night, but Henrika knew exactly who he was. She could feel the dark eyes boring straight into her own, his eyes that were wild with hate and vengeance.

"_Would you look at that," rasped the gravelly voice, "the pride of Berk, so defenceless and with no pet to even call for help . .
."_"

Said 'pet' was currently subdued and had no way of escaping from its confinements any time soon.

No_, she wanted to plead._ Stop what you are doing and let me go. We can sort this out another way. One that doesn't include us inflicting pain on each other.

"_Your father made many mistakes in his life as a chief, _comrade_, " he spat, clearly disgusted with the current subject of this one-sided conversation. "What he fails to understand, though, is that the more mistakes he make, the more those he considers close to him will _suffer!_"_

Henrika struggled against her bonds, trying her best to free herself, but the knots were too tight, too far up for her hands to reach -

_The first streaks of lightning rent through the sky, catching the glint of steel flashing, the boom of thunder drowning the bloodcurdling scream that echoed a thousand horrors . . . _

* * *

><p>The week that followed Gandalf's arrival was busy for many people. The residents of Rivendell welcomed their kin from Mirkwood along with the dwarves from the Lonely Mountain. The party of Men that travelled from Gondor arrived three days later.<p>

Henrika kept to herself, taking care to keep Toothless away from prying eyes. She had hoped to introduce the dragon to the visitors after her godfather's council. While Rivendell was making its acquaintance with the new guests, the Viking hid herself away in the forge, sharpening what was made blunt by use and repairing what was broken in battle. She only appeared within the public eye when she sat down for meals, but would quickly disappear before drawing too much attention to herself.

When the day arrived for the gathering of the representatives, Henrika woke up early and immediately began to prepare herself. She donned a traditional Viking dress that was made of a rich green fabric and lined with golden embroidery. There was not much that she could do with the unruly mess that was her hair except to weave in a golden circlet in an attempt to tame it.

Walking to the room where the gathering would be held did nothing to soothe her nerves. Henrika was very much aware that the decisions that would be made on this day will have a great influence on the future survival of the Free People. What scared her more was that she would have to have a say as well, and that she could very easily make

a fool of herself or vouch for the wrong choice.

After meeting up with Aragorn, Glorfindel, Erebor and several other advisors of her godfather, the room was slowly filled with the representatives of the other races, whom she all greeted with a respectful nod. The last to arrive were Elrond, Gandalf and Frodo. Gandalf took his seat next to Henrika as Frodo sat on the wizard's other side. The silence hung in the air before Elrond stood from his seat and began to speak:

"Strangers from distant lands; friends of old," he acknowledged those present. "You have all been summoned here to answer the threat of Mordor. Middle-earth stands upon the brink of destruction — no one can escape it. You will unite," Henrika sneaked a glance at some of the impassive faces seated around her, "or you will fall. Each race is bound to this one fate, this one doom . . ."

He paused, before gesturing to the young Hobbit. "Bring forth the Ring, Frodo," the elf lord requested, gesturing with his outstretched hand to the marble pedestal that was located in the centre of the room. Taking a deep breath, the Hobbit rose to his feet and made his way to the pedestal, placing the relic onto it and quickly returning to his seat next to Gandalf.

What surprised the Viking was the sheer plainness of the Ring, for it was made of nothing except a simple smooth band of gold. The surprise quickly turned to fear and anger as she sensed the waves of black magic and malice that was rolling off of the seemingly insignificant object. She could hear voices in her head, whispering hateful things and stirring some of her darkest memories.

No, she thought firmly, you are not welcome here. Leave and begone! _

"So it is true then," a whisper broke the tense silence in the room, pulling Henrika out of her internal battle. She looked up to see Lord Boromir, the representative of Gondor, standing up while gazing intently at the Ring that now rested in front of them.

"In a dream," he continued, "I saw the Eastern sky grow dark, but in the West a pale light lingered. A voice was crying, 'Your doom is near at hand! Isildur's bane has been found!'"

Henrika tensed as she realised that the man was walking closer to the pedestal, his eyes lustfully fixed onto the Ring. While she could reject the temptation of taking the cursed relic for herself, there were, sadly, others who did not possess the same self-control that she had.

"Isildur's bane," he whispered longingly as he reached out with his hand as if to snatch the Ring from its place on the marble.

"Boromir!" Henrika and Elrond called simultaneously, her godfather jumping from his seat, ready to wrestle the tempted man away from his desire. The sky suddenly grew dark and thunder rumbled in the distance as Gandalf started to recite the Ring Verse in Black Speech:

"_**Ash**__**nazg**__**durbatulÃ»k**_"

_**Ash nazg**__**gimbatul**_

_**Ash
nazg**__**thrakatulÃ»k**_

_**Agh**__**burzum-ishi**__**krimpatul**__**!"**_

The reaction was immense. Boromir backed away to his seat, startled by the sudden supernatural intervention. The dwarves growled and gnashed their teeth at the sound of Black Speech. The elves winced and grimaced, for it was physically painful for them to listen. Elrond had sunk into his seat again, his face wearing a tortured expression as the Grey One continued to chant. Henrika quickly got up from her seat and stood by her godfather, placing a hand on his shoulder as a sign of comfort and support. With the Verse complete, the clouds parted from the skies again, the light of the sun bathing the council with its warm glow.

"Never before has anyone uttered the words of that tongue here in Imladris."

"I do not ask for your pardon, Lord Elrond," Gandalf replied tersely, "for the Black Speech of Mordor may it be heard in every corner of the West! The Ring is altogether evil."

"Nay, it is a gift!" Boromir broke in. "A gift to the foes of Mordor! Why not use this Ring?" he challenged, glancing at the rest of the council. Henrika shook her head sadly at his suggestion. Many men before him have tried that option, only for them to succumb to temptation and madness and thus walking straight into the grasp of Sauron's power.

"Long has my father, the Steward of Gondor, kept the forces of Mordor at bay. By the blood of our people are your lands kept safe. Give Gondor the weapon of the enemy and let us use it against him!"

"You cannot wield it, none of us can!" Aragorn spoke, trying to make the Steward's son see sense. "The One Ring answers to Sauron alone. It has no other master."

"And what would a ranger know of this matter?" Boromir sneered contemptuously, looking at Henrika's brother as if he was beneath the Gondorian.

Henrika decided that she have had enough of this arrogant man's prideful boasts. "He is no mere ranger, son of Denethor! He is Aragorn, son of Arathorn. You of all people owe him your allegiance," she spoke sharply, as if she were a mother scolding a child for rude behaviour. Boromir looked at her with mild surprise before returning his gaze to her brother.

"This is Aragorn? This is Isildur's heir?" he asked, as if he thought that this was merely a jest.

"And the heir to the throne of Gondor," the Viking continued, feeling a sense of pride passing through her as she looked at her brother.

"Havo dad, Eruraviel_", he spoke quietly, clearly embarrassed by all

of the attention that he was receiving.

"_N'uuma_", "she replied, refusing to back down. She was a Viking, and Vikings always defended the honour of their family and battle-siblings.

"Gondor _has_ no king," Boromir hissed as he moved to sit down again, "Gondor _needs_ no king!"

"Aragorn is right," Gandalf interjected, "we cannot use it."

"You have only one choice," Elrond continued, rising from his seat again, "It _must_ be destroyed."

One of the dwarves, Gimli, suddenly rose from his seat. "Well, then. What are we waiting for!?" He charged forward, raising his battle axe to strike the Ring. Just as it was about to make contact, the axe exploded into tiny pieces, a great force forcing Gimli on his back. One of the other dwarves stood and helped his fallen comrade up.

"The Ring cannot be destroyed, Gimli, son of GlÃ³in, by any craft that we have in our possession. The Ring was made within the burning heart of Mount Doom. Only there can it be unmade. It must be taken deep into Mordor and cast back into the fiery chasm from whence it came! One of you must do this."

A tense silence followed Elrond's words. Henrika would have volunteered to take it, but she knew that it would have been a fatal decision. Although she can withstand the calling, her heart was too full of grief for her people and hate for Sauron. The Ring would have over time allowed her to be consumed by her anger and hate until she was nothing more than a bloodthirsty war machine.

"One does not simply walk into Mordor," Boromir spoke again, defeated. "Its Black Gates are guarded by more than just Orcs . . . there is an evil there that does not sleep! The Great Eye is ever watchful . . . it is a barren wasteland riddled with fire and ash and dust. The very air you breathe is a poisonous fume! Not even with ten thousand me could you do this. It is folly!"

Have you heard nothing what Lord Elrond has said?" Legolas, the prince of Mirkwood, spoke angrily as he jumped up from his seat. "The Ring must be destroyed!"

"And I suppose _you_ think you're the one to do it!" Gimli bit back.

"And if we fail what then? What happens if Sauron takes back what is his?" Boromir challenged the Elf rising from his seat again.

"I will be _dead_ before I see the Ring in the hands of an _Elf!_" Gimli snarled, jumping up, "_Never trust and Elf!_"

This boisterous statement caused everyone, save for Elrond, Gandalf and Frodo to rise from their seats and ensue in arguments and insults about the Ring and the different races. Henrika just shook her head, frustrated and disappointed that the representatives would quarrel about something so insignificant.

"I will take it!" a voice cried out, but it was drowned by the din of the fighting council members. Henrika looked to where Frodo was, his face set with determination. She moved from her godfather's seat and stood before the arguers.

"ENOUGH!" she shrieked trying to get their attention. The men stilled and turned to her. "I do believe that someone has volunteered for this quest. Heed his words!" she snapped, before turning to Frodo and giving him a smile of encouragement.

Frodo swallowed. "I will take the Ring to Mordor, although, I do not know the way."

Gandalf stepped forward, "I will help you bear this burden, Frodo Baggins, for as long as it is your burden to bear." He squeezed the Hobbit's shoulder, smiling gently at him.

"Be it by my life or death that I can protect you, I will. You have my sword," Aragorn spoke, kneeling in front of Frodo.

"And you have my bow," Legolas said.

"And my axe," Gimli interjected gruffly, as if to challenge the Elf again.

Then Boromir spoke again: "You carry the fate of us all, little one. If this is indeed the will of this council, the Gondor will see it done." He smiled, ruffling the Hobbit's hair before turning to stand by his side.

Before Henrika could open her mouth, a voice sounded. "Here!" Sam called, rushing from his hiding place to stand next to his friend. "Mister Frodo is not going anywhere without me," he said bravely, trying to look smug about it.

"No! Indeed it is hardly possible to separate the two of you, even when he is summoned to a secret council and you are not," Elrond replied cheekily, giving Sam an indignant look.

"Oi! We're coming too!" came the voice of Merry as he rushed from his hiding place behind a pillar, with Pippin closely behind him. "You'll have to send us back tied up in a sack to stop us!"

"Anyway," Pippin continued, "you need some people with intelligence on this mission . . . quest . . . thing!"

"Well, that rules you out, Pip," Merry interjected.

"Henrika?" the Viking looked at her godfather, "Do you wish to add something?"

Henrika took a deep breath before walking over to Frodo and lowering herself onto one knee. "I may not be able to bear this burden of yours, Frodo Baggins, but I will help you in any way that I can. I offer you my sword, my shield, my allegiance and my trust to ensure that fate will always be in your favour," she said gently, silently rejoicing in the Hobbit's smile before getting up to stand next to Gandalf.

"Ten companions," Elrond murmured, "So be it! You shall be the

Fellowship of the Ring."

"Great!" Pippin cried, "Now, where are we going?"

* * *

><p>Let me know what you think! :)

6. Chapter 5: Fire of Acquaintance

****AN:** I am a terrible writer. I admit it. The reason why I haven't updated in such a long time was that I had so much going on in my life. Being a university student takes a toll on personal life and hobbies. I will not abandon this story, though! That I can promise you. The updates will however be sporadic and unpredictable.**

****Anyway,** here's the new chapter! Enjoy and let me know what you think.**

* * *

><p>Chapter 5: Fire of Acquaintance

The council ended after that and soon the attendees disbanded, each heading in a different direction. Henrika did not idle either, taking the swiftest route to the forges. If she were to partake in this dangerous mission, she had to be prepared thoroughly. Yanking a faded leather apron off of a hook near the doors and putting it on, she rolled up the sleeves of her dress and binding the floppy material to her arms with some string before shoving them into leather gloves. Henrika's hands were not her greatest mark of physical beauty; unlike an _elleth_ her fingers were rough and calloused, her palms bore scars of many battles – both from her time as a Viking and the time that she had roamed Middle-Earth.

Henrika did not consider herself to be a woman of impeccable beauty. She was slender, but did not possess grace and elegance. When she was living among men and women that were made of solid muscle, she was regarded as a fragile being. Being born too early and a childhood that was riddled with ill-health certainly played a role in her misfit persona. She had no fair skin – it was somewhat darkened by years of working as a blacksmith and riddled with many freckles. She even had a missing foot! Now that is not exactly ideal for a potential bride, is it?

A low croon broke her out of her reverie, and Henrika turned to be greeted by a very eager dragon. Smiling, she petted him vigorously paying extra care to scratch his sweet spots. Toothless trilled and crooned in greeting. Suddenly, he jerked his head from her hands and peaking over her head towards the entrance of the forges.

"That was quite the impression that you left back there," Legolas said as he leaned by the doorway. His posture was relaxed as if was carefree, his eyes glinting with quiet mirth. Toothless, recognising the elf yipped excitedly and bounded over to greet him. Legolas smiled, patting the jovial beast while purred with content.

"Well someone had to make them see reason! The council would have

dragged on for ages if I had not intervened," Henrika quipped, turning back to the forge where she pulled a short blade out of the coals with a pair of tongs. Carefully she placed it on the anvil and started to beat it into streamlined blade. Once she was satisfied, she dipped the red-hot metal into a slack tub. The weapon hissed and spat steam as it cooled down.

There was silence before she spoke again. "How are you these days? Did anything interesting happen in Mirkwood recently?"

He shrugged. "The forest may be ever changing, but the society has stayed the same. My father misses you â€" he sends his fondest regards."

Henrika smiled at that, "And the spider infestations? How is that coming along since I left?"

Legolas smirked. "Well, no one has died yet - a few scrapes and gashes here and there. Tauriel was poisoned during one incident, but she recovered swiftly. She still asks for you from time to time."

Henrika chuckled as she began to sharpen another blade with a small whetstone. The silence ensued until she looked up from her work to speak again, only to close her mouth at the sight of facial expression. His eyes were glazed over, as if he was lost in deep thoughts. She put down her equipment and walked over to his leaning frame by the entrance. "Something seems to be bothering you, my friend. Would you care to share your thoughts?" she asked, taking his hand in hers.

A frown creased his forehead. "I am worried, Henrika. I fear for what the future might hold for this world. The spiders are not just the only problem that we face in Mirkwood. Stirrings have corrupted parts of the forest. An ancient evil has started to infect the very life around the ruins of Dol Goldur. The very essence of nature has changed." He looked down at their joined hands. "I fear for my family and friends."

Henrika squeezed his hand softly, trying to give him comfort. "In times like these one can only hope for the best. For so long we have fought against evil and its influence. Now we have the chance to end what was unleashed more than an age ago. We have resources as well as the support for the cause spread across the kingdoms. The odds are now within our favour."

"And if the mission succeeds? What will become of you once the traitor to your people is gone?" Legolas asked, intertwining their fingers. "What is to become of my best friend?"

She looked up into his eyes with a sad smile. "Only the Valar knows my fate. I was blessed to live as long as I have â€" receiver of a gift in the form a second life. When the time is right, I will be judged like any other living being that dwells upon this world. If I am deemed worthy I will pass through Mandos' halls and rejoin my people in Valhalla."

"I wish it were different, though," Legolas huffed, circling his arms around the blacksmith's frame and pulling her into an embrace.

"We wish for so much, but we must remind ourselves to be content with what we have," she sighed.

A loud yell suddenly interrupted the two companions, followed by an inhuman shriek. Grabbing the nearest weapon, which was an old pair of steel tongs, Henrika rushed to the entrance of the forge, with Legolas hot on her heels. What they came across was equally bizarre and unexpected.

It turned out that Toothless decided to sun himself in the afternoon sun whilst his mistress finished up in the forge. What he did not expect was for a certain Steward's son to happen upon him. Boromir, mistaking the dragon for an intruding monster, drew his sword and charged at the dragon without thinking twice about it. Said dragon, of course, was immediately startled awake and defended himself in the quickest way possible. That included biting and mangling the blade with his razor sharp teeth before jumping onto his attacker and pinning him down, snarling in his face.

"Stop! Everyone stop!" Henrika shouted, hoping to gain control of the situation. Toothless flashed a quick glance at his mistress before turning his attention back to the man trapped underneath him.

"Toothless, that's enough! Step off of the man and step away! He means you no harm," she reprimanded the dragon, praying that he would listen to her. The black beast gave Boromir one last glare before he slowly released him from his grip. As quick as he could, the man shuffled away from the dragon's reach and struggled his way up to a standing position.

"I am so sorry! Forgive me, if I knew he would -"

"What devilry is this?" he hissed, his face stark white with fury. Henrika knew that she had to act quickly if she wanted to avoid unnecessary death or injury. Running up to the dragon's side, she softly stroked the side of his neck before pinching the nerve that rested underneath the chin. The effect was immediate – Toothless crumpled into a subdued heap of wings and limbs.

A tense silence followed before she spoke again. "I apologise profusely, my lord, for his actions. He thought of you as a threat. It will not happen again."

"You defend this wild beast?" Boromir spat, aghast.

"Have care how you speak, man of Gondor," Legolas sharply replied, "she just saved you from an untimely demise. Give her a chance to clarify what just happened and then you may yet understand why you were attacked in the first place."

Henrika glanced at him and mouthed a silent _thank you_ before turning back to Boromir. "Once again I apologise on behalf of my dragon. He was only defending himself, for he thought that you were attacking him."

Boromir calmed down, but still remained suspicious. "How did you manage to capture a creature like this?"

"I didn't. I rescued him one day when I found him injured and trapped

in a cove. I nursed him back to health and he has never left my side since," Henrika replied. Her attention was then drawn to the mangled piece of metal that once was Boromir's sword. "Oh no... I am so sorry about that!" She picked it up to see whether she could salvage it, but there was too much damage. She sighed, "I'll make you a new sword. This one is too damaged." She turned around to head back to the forge.

"Wait! You want to make a completely new weapon? There is not enough time before we must depart! Just help me find a suitable replacement!" Boromir exclaimed, following Henrika to the forges.

She stopped and turned around. "To send you off on this journey with an unbalanced sword would be just as bad if you were to go without a proper weapon! Besides, I haven't spent all these years among elves learning nothing. Come along, by the time the sun sets tomorrow afternoon you will be outfitted with a proper weapon." She turned to head to the forges again before a thought crossed her mind. "Oh, and Legolas," she said, "Do keep an eye on Toothless until he wakes up. I will introduce him properly to our guests."

Legolas nodded once, and Henrika turned to the forges once more, with a bewildered Boromir trailing behind her.

* * *

><p>Henrika was not fooling around when she promised Boromir a proper sword. When they reached her workshop, she cleared blueprints and stray weapons from her desk before she dug out her measuring tape. "Hold out your sword hand, please."<p>

The Steward's son stuck his right hand out and Henrika proceeded to measure the length of his forearm as well as the width of his palm, making mental notes to herself as she worked. She then moved towards a rack containing different types of metals, looking for the right combination to create an alloy that would be light yet durable in a battle. Grabbing the chosen pieces, she placed in a crucible before placing it with a pair of tongs into the hearth where it was surrounded by the intense heat of the roaring blaze.

"The metal should be ready for pouring by sundown," she said, shutting the opening of the hearth to trap the heat within, "There is enough fuel for the fire to melt the metal."

"Thank you for your trouble, my lady," Boromir replied, inclining his head in respect.

Henrika smiled, "You are more than welcome, my friend, though I must confess that we have not been properly introduced. My name is Henrika Haddock, adopted daughter of lord Elrond." She held her hand out to Boromir, which he took into a firm handshake.

"Boromir, Captain-General of the White Tower. If I may ask, did you make all of these weapons?" He gestured to the cases of swords and daggers stacked upon each other by her desk and the collection of shields that hung on the wall above.

Henrika nodded, "Indeed I have."

"How did you end up living with the elves in the Hidden Valley? You do not strike me as an elf, if I may be so bold."

She shrugged, "To make a very long story short, I was born into a loving family and a tribe that supported me. Then I lost everything and was taken in by lord Elrond himself and was adopted as his own child. I have lived with the elves ever since."

"The elves are known for their goodwill and generosity. It must have been a blessing to walk among them," Boromir mused, eyes drifting toward the symbols painted and etched onto the shields, focusing on a particular symbol of a dragon curling onto itself, its mouth pulled into an almost grotesque smile. "What symbol is this? It is most peculiar."

"Oh, that?" Henrika asked, "It's the crest of my tribe. One of the very few things I have left to remind me of home."

"Wait," the Captain-General said, as if he was remembering something, "You're her, aren't you?"

"What?" Henrika was confused.

"The old Dragon Master. Some of the old N  menor stories tell of an ancient race of Man that once roamed the skies on dragon-back. My grandfather once told me of a story that Isildur himself wrote about a woman who bewitched a horde of dragons that followed her into war."

Henrika was perplexed. The N  menor actually wrote these types of stories about her people? "Well, in a sense, that's who I am. I'm just not that certain about the whole bewitching hocus-pocus that you're blabbering on about."

"How did you survive? My ancestors thought that you all but perished, sunk beneath the waves of the Western Sea--"

Henrika was becoming annoyed. Although she could comprehend the man's curiosity, the subject was not something that she enjoyed talking about. "It's a long and tedious tale that I'm not willing to tell right now," she interrupted, her irritated tone signalling the end of the conversation.

* * *

><p>By sundown the metal had completely melted into a fiery yellow liquid, as Henrika had predicted. With the mould ready, she gently lifted the crucible out of the hearth with a pair of tongs and poured the blazing river into the form of a broadsword. While waiting for the metal to cool, she cleaned the anvil to prevent any impurities from contaminating the metal. When it was cool enough to pick up without losing its form, Henrika pounded the sword into a streamlined submission before placing it into the slack tub. Hot steam rose like a geyser as the weapon cooled down, revealing the obscured silver sheen of unpolished metal. With the blade ready, it was time to fashion a handle. Using the measurements that she had taken earlier that day, she crafted a sturdy handle with little grooves that complimented the user's fingers. Along the sides she started to etch Elvish runes, a custom performed by many Elven smiths to ensure the wielder protection in combat. She then engraved the name of the sword

onto the blade in both Sindarin and Norse: Fearless Defender â€" a weapon that will continue to serve its wielder to the death. She then sharpened, cleaned and polished the sword until it was a glittering clear silver colour â€" wickedly sharp and strong.

Sighing, satisfied with her work, Henrika straightened herself, looking around the now empty smithy. Boromir left her company after the tense ending of their conversation â€" finding the uncomfortable silence that followed slightly overbearing. Toothless came around an hour later and was bouncing about the forge, begging for his mistress' attention. It was Merry and Pippin, who came to whisk the dragon away, however, bent on the mission to introduce him to Gimli. Needless to say, the dwarf was not entirely impressed to meet Toothless, but he warmed up to the scaly reptile when he realised that Toothless was indeed nothing like the vile fire-drake that nearly reduced his homeland to piles of rubble and ash.

"Quite the remarkable creature that you have there, lass," Gimli said as he walked with Henrika from the smithy to the main sanctuary where dinner was being served for residents and guests alike. She was carrying the newly forged sword encased within a tough leather scabbard.

"He truly is a sight to behold," she mused, a smile dancing in her eyes. "Speaking of, did you have time to replace that broken axe of yours? I'm more than willing to help you find a suitable replacement."

"Now don't you worry about that, lass," the dwarf replied, "If there is one lesson that my father GlÃ³in has taught me, it's that a dwarf can never have too many weapons."

"Well, I can definitely understand the logic behind that piece of advice."

The duo continued onwards to the great hall, where people have already begun to gather around for dinner. Platters of fresh fruit and vegetables, cheese, bread and stews were passed around freely, with everyone getting their fill. Gandalf was surrounded by the four Hobbits, with Arwen sitting to the side with her father. Toothless was gallivanting around the Halflings, cooing and purring, gobbling up every morsel that they gave him. There was, however, no sign of either Aragorn or Boromir. Lord Elrond looked up, alerted by their presence, and shot Henrika a disapproving look when he noticed the state of her appearance. She sighed, knowing that the material of her dress was completely ruined from the time she spent in the smithy. Her face was flushed from the heat of the forge and stained with grease from the many times that she used her glove-covered hands to wipe the sweat from her forehead.

"Does anyone know where Boromir is? I have something to give to him," she asked gesturing to the newly crafted sword in her hands. She then moved to Arwen's side, giving her a one-armed hug from behind.

"He will be here soon, my dear" Gandalf spoke, meeting her gaze, "And I am certain that he will greatly appreciate the effort that you have put in to make him a new weapon on such short notice."

Henrika shrugged, "Well, it's the least that I can do. It is my fault

after all that he lost his sword in the first place. Speaking of, was he properly acquainted with the silly lizard yet?"

"Yes, he was," Legolas spoke up from his seat, "I must confess, though, it was rather strained, but both of them have reached an accord of sorts."

She smiled as she made her way to Toothless' side, petting him lovingly. "Well, it's good that everyone will get along with each other. If we are going to survive we will need to be able to trust one another when the time comes..." she trailed off, now kneeling beside the dragon to give him proper attention. "And we will need you to be a good boy, bud. Yes you! Who's a good dragon?" Toothless warbled, clearly pleased with the attention that his mistress was giving him.

"Well then," Henrika said, straightening herself upright, "please excuse me while I make myself more presentable." And with that she left the great hall, heading straight for her chambers.

* * *

><p>Let me know what you think! ;)

End
file.